

CUTS IN ACTION

CUTS
International

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Assessing Consumer Impact



Calling a landline number from a mobile phone or vice versa has become a Herculean task. It takes scores of attempts to connect such calls. Most often the number dialled returns with dismal replies of appears to be 'switched off', out of reach or the network remains 'busy' forever. The monthly report brought out by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), reveals an alarming rise in the degree of congestion between operators.

One wonders, if this is the state of affairs when the telecom subscriber base has just crossed the 100-million mark, what would happen when it reaches the targeted 250-million mark by 2008?

The reason for the congestion is primarily inefficient and inadequate interconnection among telecom operators.

All this while, TRAI has been boasting of subscribers crossing the 100-million mark, mobile phones exceeding landlines, but has failed to ensure efficient interconnection among operators.

Even though the sector is competitive, service providers are not bothered about value for money. Quality of service has taken a beating. TRAI's data shows a significant increase in consumer complaints. The redressal mechanism is equally weak. Tariffs have tumbled, but monthly telephone bills have actually increased. Choice is limited, as switching operators implies losing the existing telephone number. The gap between urban and rural areas is widening and increase in teledensity in rural areas is actually slowing down.

Nevertheless, TRAI has taken certain commendable measures. It has provided a platform to all the stakeholders including consumer organisations to air their views, setting a good benchmark in participatory decision-making. It's handling of tariff regulation has brought down the per call tariff rates in the country, and are amongst the lowest in the world.

For all its efforts, TRAI was given the 'Best Regulator' Award for the year 2003. However, if its effectiveness were judged from a consumer's perspective, TRAI would not have got the award, given the various consumer concerns.

It is high time TRAI judged its effectiveness from consumer's perspective, and set a benchmark for other regulatory bodies. All our regulatory laws recognise protection of consumer interest as one of its primary objectives. This calls for doing a periodic 'Consumer Impact Assessment (CIA)', to look at policies and practices from a consumer's viewpoints.

CIA helps assess if markets and public services are working in the interest of consumers. It greatly enhances accountability of the regulator and relevant government departments towards consumers. All policies, regulations and practices are assessed on the touchstone of eight consumer principles: value for money, access, choice, information, redress, safety, fairness, and representation.

All regulatory agencies and government departments should employ CIA for the corresponding policies, regulations and practices. The tool is gaining wide popularity in several countries, and with regulatory reforms gaining pace in India, it is time to employ it here as well.

Pradeep S. Mehta

Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

Have a Stronger Voice in the Furtherance of Consumer Interest



IDEC-Brazilian Institute for Consumer Defense, would like to congratulate CUTS for its 20th anniversary, allied with the best wishes for an ever growing and stronger consumer movement in India. Although far from our colleagues, we at IDEC can hear the voice and see the work of CUTS.

We believe IDEC and CUTS have an important role to play in the development of a critical conscience and of active citizenship of consumers in both Brazil and India. Our countries are crucial for the development of the Southern hemisphere and for the global level, so we expect that our organisations can have an increasing exchange and a stronger voice in the furtherance of consumer interest.

Marilena Lazzarini

Executive Coordinator

*Brazilian Institute of Defence of the Consumer (IDEC),
Brazil & President, Consumers International*

Continued Work at the Grassroots



I have been following-up the activities of this organisation since a long time, perhaps since its inception. CUTS has been generating awareness among the villagers about various development programmes through its literature and postures, and has been taking forward their problems to the Central and the State Governments.

I am particularly impressed with its wall newspaper, *Gram Gadar* (Village Revolution), and feel a sense of pride, as I was consulted when it was being conceptualised in 1983. CUTS emerged from *Gram Gadar*, when they found many of our rural folks complaining about consumer abuses, such as burning out of electric motors due to voltage fluctuations; short weighing at fair price shops etc.

C P Joshi

*Former Minister for Planning and Programme
Implementation, Rajasthan, India*

EVENTS

Pro-Poor Growth

Bipul Chatterjee and Purnima Purohit of CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment (CUTS-CITEE), Jaipur, India participated in a workshop of the Research Programme Consortium on 'Role of Institutions in Pro-Poor Growth' held at Nairobi, Kenya during September 26-30, 2005. CUTS-CITEE is one of the consortium members.

The workshop was hosted by African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), Nairobi, Kenya. The purpose of the workshop was to deliberate on the scope and methodology of the project as well as to agree on the work programme. (www.lse.ac.uk/collections/IPPG)

CSOs on Agriculture and T&C

CUTS Calcutta Resource Centre (CUTS-CRC) successfully organised the State-level workshop under 'Grassroots Reachout & Networking in India on Trade & Economics' (GRANITE) Project at Burdwan, West Bengal, on September 12, 2005. The workshop involved the grassroot-level civil society organisations (CSOs), government officers, university professors and representatives from training institutions and media.

The sessions of the workshop were highly interactive and the participants eagerly took part in the group discussions on the topic. (www.granite.org.in/media8.htm)

Promoting Trade Alliances

CUTS-CITEE in partnership with Research & Information System for Non Aligned and Other Developing Countries (RIS) organised a National Consultation on the project entitled, 'South-South Economic Cooperation: Exploring Mekong-Ganga Relationship' at New Delhi, India, on September 1, 2005.

The Consultation aimed to develop appropriate policy responses and also to discuss project-related activities and methodology to implement and to strengthen the capacity of Indo-China

Autonomy and Accountability

To push ahead the trend of establishing independent regulatory bodies for different sectors, CUTS Centre for Competition, Investment & Economic Regulation (CUTS-CCIER) organised a series of three policy dialogues on 'Regulatory Autonomy and Accountability in India' in New Delhi on May 7, July 23, and September 10, 2005 respectively.

The suggestions and recommendations that emerged from the discussions would be finalised and are planned to be released in the form of a booklet, which will serve as a resource guide, for agencies like the Planning Commission of India.



(cuts-international.org/eventsreport2005.htm#raa26sep05)

countries on issues of South-South trade and investment cooperation.

(cuts-international.org/eventsreport2005.htm#mgr1sep05)

Investment Policy Review

Consumer Unity and Trust Society-Africa Resource Centre (CUTS-ARC) in collaboration with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the Ministry of Commerce Trade and Industry (MCTI), Zambia organised one-day stakeholder's workshop on the investment policy review of Zambia at Lusaka, Zambia on August 22, 2005.

UNCTAD, as a focal point within the United Nations (UN) for the integrated treatment of all matters related to foreign direct investment (FDI), carried out a study entitled, 'the Investment Policy Review of Zambia'.

(cuts-international.org/cutsinmedia2005.htm#scr23aug05)

Project Appraisal Meet

CUTS-CCIER has been implementing a two-year project on 'Advocacy and Capacity Building on Competition Policy and Law in Asia (7Up2)' in six countries in Asia: Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Lao

PDR Nepal and Vietnam since May 2004. Having reached the halfway mark, C-CCIER organised a 'Project Review Meeting' at Hanoi, Vietnam on August 16-17, 2005.

Experts from all over the world, including representatives of the project donors – the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, Switzerland (SECO), Swiss Competition Commission (COMCO) and the Department for International Development (DFID) participated and contributed substantially to the discourse.

(cuts-international.org/eventsreport2005.htm#pirm16aug05)

Rallying the Youth Power

On the occasion of World Youth Day, an impressive gathering was organised by CUTS Centre for Human Development (CUTS-CHD) in Bhilwara, Rajasthan, on August 12, 2005. About 350 participants, including the girls, took part in a big rally and recited slogans on the youth power.

The programme aimed to sensitise the youth towards their rights and responsibilities and to help them define their role in the making of a prosperous and powerful nation. (cuts-international.org/forthcoming-events.htm#youth12aug05)

Children of Unknown World

CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS-CART), in partnership with Save the Children (UK) has conceptualised a unique project entitled, 'Hum Bhi Bachche Hain' (we, too, are children) on child domestic workers. The project, which was formally launched at Jaipur, India, on July 27, 2005, will be implemented through 35 selected schools of Jaipur city.

The project aims to understand and generate awareness about 'Child Domestic Workers' through schools in Jaipur using a child-to-child approach. It also aims at the advocacy and capacity building at Rajasthan State-level, involving different stakeholders and the Government to prevent child domestic work.

(cuts-international.org/eventsreport2005.htm#child27july05)

Coalition at WTO Ministerial

CUTS-CITEE organised a daylong national consultation in New Delhi, India, on September 17, 2005. The consultation deliberated on the key issues under the project entitled, 'WTO Doha Round & South Asia: Linking Civil Society with Trade Negotiations.' The project is named as South Asia Forum for International Trade (SAFIT).



The objective of the consultation was to provide a discussion forum to the relevant players on issues relating to the Doha Round of negotiations leading up to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Hong Kong Ministerial. Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General of CUTS International highlighted

the need for sustaining a coalition, like the G-20 group, of developing countries at the WTO, on issues of agriculture. (cuts-international.org/news-cuts2005.htm#delhi17sep05)

REPRESENTATION

Legal Regimes on Biodiversity

Dalia Dey of CUTS-CRC participated in the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) conference on 'Legal Aspects of Biodiversity & Community Knowledge' held at Dhaka, Bangladesh on September 27, 2005. The meeting was jointly organised by Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (BELA) and SAARC Peoples' Forum.

The main purpose of the meeting was to review the present state of the legal regimes related to convention on biological diversity and bio-safety protocol and issues related to biotechnology and bio-security.

Dispute Settlement Mechanism

Mehta and Sonali Singh participated in a seminar on 'Dispute Settlement Mechanism in Telecom Sector in India', organised by the Telecom Disputes Settlement & Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) held at Jaipur, Rajasthan, on September 3, 2005.

The seminar was attended by a varied and distinguished delegation. The audience included the stakeholders from various consumer organisations from different parts of India, media persons etc. Mehta made a presentation on 'How to Prevent Disputes in the Telecom Sector'.

Methodology for Trade

Bipul Chatterjee attended an event on 'trade facilitation' jointly organised jointly by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Initiative (APTII) and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) at Bangkok, Thailand, on August 16-17, 2005.

The objective of the event was to develop a work programme on trade facilitation in the region. He made a presentation on 'Methodological Aspects of Costs for Doing Trade'.

Agreement on Agriculture

UNCTAD-India and Department of Commerce, Government of India invited Pranav Kumar to make a presentation on 'Export Competition Pillar of WTO Agreement on Agriculture (AoA)' in their joint stakeholder consultation workshop entitled, 'Pre WTO Hong Kong Ministerial Meeting Consultation: Agriculture Negotiations', in New Delhi, on July 19-20, 2005.

He made the presentation from Indian perspective and underscored the need to prioritise phasing out of direct export subsidies with a frontloaded approach by focusing on products of export interest to developing countries.

Make Poverty History!

CUTS-London Resource Centre (CUTS-LRC) participated in the rally 'Make Poverty History' organised by the NGO coalition, with 200,000 lakh people participating, in Edinburgh, on July 2, 2005. LRC participated to raise awareness, to create more subscribers to its newsletter, 'Bridging the Gap' and to promote its welcome pack, 'Friends of CUTS'.



CUTS-LRC team stationed a stall and conducted the trade game prepared for the rally. People were very much convinced by CUTS' independent and pragmatic approach to trade as well as its focus on supply constraints, which are being faced by developing countries (trade facilitation). They praised CUTS' advocacy for the necessity of adequate government legislative frameworks concerning trade.

Parliamentarians' Forum on Economic Issues



CUTS is playing host to an initiative taken by five Members of Parliament (MPs) to establish a forum of parliamentarians on economic issues. The forum would act as a common platform, where MPs cutting across party lines, would be able to air their views on a periodical basis on core economic issues reflected in and out of the Parliament and the media. Also, they would discuss trade, competition, regulatory reforms, investment and cross linkages there in.

There has been an encouraging response from the MPs, who were invited to join this forum. Discussions on emerging economic policy issues would be initiated through debates, once the forum achieves a sizeable membership base.

SHORT CUTS

- Pooja Sharma, Sheetal Bharat, Swati Chada and Vinamrata Rathore of CUTS attended the Management Development Programme (MDP) on 'Communication and Presentation Skills,' which was held at Fore School of Management, New Delhi, from September 19-21, 2005. The programme focused on the enhancement of verbal and non-verbal communication.
- Gideon Rabinowitz of CUTS-LRC participated in the Trade Policy Consultative Forum (TPCF), UK Department for Trade and Industry (DTI), at London, UK, on September 12, 2005. The TPCF is a forum held on quarterly basis to consult the civil society bodies in relation to trade policy.
- Alice Pham of CUTS-CCIER participated in the 'Asian Conference on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Consumer Movement' organised by the Consumers International Regional Office of Asia-Pacific in Kuala Lumpur, on August 23, 2005.
- Manish Agarwal of CUTS-CCIER participated in a consultation seminar on trade and industry with policymakers and stakeholders jointly organised by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, Asian Development Bank and the Ministry of Finance (Government of India), in New Delhi, on August 17, 2005.
- George Cheriyan and Vinayak R Pandey of CUTS attended a World Bank (WB) presentation on the draft economic report of Rajasthan entitled, 'Closing Development Gap', on August 12, 2005. Several senior bureaucrats and representatives of CSOs/academic institutions attended the presentation.
- Mita Dutta of CUTS-CRC participated in the State Consumer Protection Council held at Kolkata, West Bengal, on July 28, 2005. The meeting evaluated the progress made by the council in taking up various activities of consumer welfare and discussed the future agenda.
- Vladimir Chilinya of CUTS-ARC participated in the Diagnostic Trade Integration Study (DTIS) validation workshop organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry, Zambia, at Lusaka on July 8, 2005. The workshop aimed at identifying the priority reforms and trade-related technical assistance programme to overcome the constraints to the expansion and diversification of exports.

FORUM

Thank you for sending a copy of the newsletter 'Making Things Happen.' Certainly, the mentioned publication constitutes a very useful tool and information source to our daily institutional work.

Finally, we are also interested in hearing about any other publications or material from CUTS and would be happy in receiving other related literature.

Looking forward for your news. Thank you again.

*Dr Oscar Lanza V. (MD; MPH)
General Coordinator
AIS/HAI – Bolivia*

VISITORS

Name	Comments
Dr Vijaya & Dr R Bharat, Tata Steel, Jamshedpur	Wonderful to know about this team working to the betterment of consumers. Keep up the good work!
Dr Jean Joseph Boillot, Financial Counsellor, French Embassy, New Delhi	It's a great honour for me to visit CUTS head office after so many years of wonderful contacts with its several collaborators. Looking forward to develop strong partnership in the coming years.
J V R Murty WSP-SA, World Bank, Mumbai	Nice to get introduced to the work being done here, which sounds very interesting with far reaching impact. Best wishes and keep up the good work.
Franck Wiebe The Asia Foundation San Francisco	Thanks for the hospitality. I look forward to working together in the future. The Asia Foundation will be honoured to have such a partner in India and in the region.

Glimpses of Ongoing and Future Projects of CUTS

CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment (CUTS-CITEE)



CUTS-CITEE is one of the consortium members of a Research Programme on 'Improving Institutions for Pro-Poor Growth'. It is funded for five years by the Department for International Development (DFID), UK since September 2005 and in association with the Development Studies Institute (DESTIN) of the London School of Economics. The Programme proposes to analyse the impacts of institutional interactions on Pro-Poor Growth (PPG) and to develop middle-range theory about them, by means of structured comparative country case studies, primarily drawn from sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), South Asia and Latin America.

CUTS Centre for Competition, Investment & Economic Regulation (CUTS-C-CIER)



CUTS C-CIER has initiated a study to assess regulatory regimes in select developing countries of Asia and Africa with support from the French international development agency, *Groupe Agence Francaise de Developpement (L'AFD)*. Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, South Africa, Vietnam and Zambia have been selected for this study. This study would establish benchmarks relevant for developing countries in sectoral regulation.

CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS-CART)



CUTS CART, in partnership with Save the Children (UK) has conceptualised a unique one-year project entitled, '*Hum Bhi Bachche Hain*' (we, too, are children) on child domestic workers. The main purpose of the project is to understand the issue and generate awareness about 'Child Domestic Workers' through schools in Jaipur using a child-to-child approach.

CUTS Centre for Human Development (CUTS-CHD)



CUTS-CHD is implementing a project entitled, 'Universal Birth Registration Programme,' which aims at generating awareness and strengthening the procedure of birth registration in the target rural areas. The project covers 14 *gram panchayats* in Chittorgarh district and 6 in Bhilwara district.

CUTS London Resource Centre (CUTS-LRC)



CUTS-LRC is implementing a project entitled, 'Capacity Building on Eastern and Southern African Civil Society during the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA).' The project aims to help increase the understanding of grassroots-based organisations about the implications of EPA on their livelihoods, and support the efforts in feeding concerns into the EPA negotiation process.

MOVING ON

Learning Research and Advocacy



Pramod Dev M

I believe CUTS is one of the best place for learning research and advocacy in India for any new entrant, like me, into the job market. In my opinion, networking and coordination are the two great strengths of CUTS. It has a unique approach to solving problems and dealing with professionals. The organisation stands for distributing a plenty of opportunities amongst its people. So, if one is patient, then the opportunities are sure to come.

Incomparable Opportunities!



P. Kulkarni

CUTS is a wonderful place for self-starters. It provides unmatched opportunities and well-rounded exposure to developmental issues. I worked on interesting projects and interacted with intelligent people. It was too comfortable when I think of it while moving on to territories unknown and paths uncharted. There are too many people to name here, so I will only say: I wish I would be continuing in the CUTS office, but I am still in the CUTS family. I am grateful for two fulfilling years of association and hope not only that our paths cross, but we walk together, another day.

CUTS Institute for Regulation & Competition (CIRC)

On September 29, 2005, chairing a meeting organised by CUTS, C Rangarajan, Chairperson, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, has launched a project for setting up the CUTS Institute for Regulation and Competition (CIRC) at Jaipur.

CIRC is expected to fill the vacuum that exists in training and education in the areas of commercial diplomacy, economic regulation and competition policy, and critically, interdisciplinary studies in the developing world. Both general and customised courses will be on offer, to meet varied requirements. The institute will take off by offering online diploma and training courses in the latter part of 2006.